

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

HOUSE COMMITTEE PASSES PRIMARY SEAT BELT BILL

The House Transportation Committee gave the green light to primary seat belt legislation as they adopted House Bill 86.

"I commend the committee for the passage of this bill and strongly encourage the entire body to pass it unanimously," said Governor Fletcher. "Nothing is more important than the lives of our citizens. We need a primary seat belt law now."

"A primary seat belt law is the single most important thing we can do in this state to reduce fatalities and serious injuries caused by vehicle crashes," said Transportation Cabinet Secretary Bill Nighbert. "I applaud the members of the committee and the leadership shown by Governor Fletcher to bring this issue to the forefront. This is about saving lives."

Statistics show about 67 percent of Kentuckians wear their seat belts. The state ranks 47th nationally in seat belt usage. If the seat belt bill becomes law, at least 62 lives will be saved in the first year.

House Transportation Committee Chairman Representative Hubert Collins (D-Wittensville) said, "With this legislation we will have one seat belt law in Kentucky without confusing designations."

A primary seat belt law would give law enforcement officers the authority to pull over a motorist simply for not wearing a seat belt. Currently, a driver has to commit another traffic offense before he or she can be pulled over for not being buckled up.

The recently approved federal highway reauthorization bill includes another incentive for a primary seat belt law. Under the federal bill, if Kentucky adopts a primary seat belt law, the state will

period of six months for teen drivers between the learner's permit and a full license. During this new intermediate phase, teenagers will have a full license with two restrictions on their driving privileges.

This legislation allows teen drivers to continue to gain essential driving experience in a more controlled environment, prior to earning a full license with no restrictions. An expanded Graduated Driver's License Program will certainly produce a solid group of safer teen drivers, and that means safer highways in Kentucky.

The bill's sponsor, Representative Tom Burch (D-Louisville), cited the example of his own personal experience, which fuels his passion for this bill. "I've lost a teenage grand daughter in an auto accident, and I can tell you that you never really get over a loss like that," said Rep. Burch. "This is definitely one of the most vital pieces of legislation I have ever introduced."

Marie Rader (R-McKee), a member of the House Transportation Committee, offered her praise for the Graduated Driver's License bill. "This measure is so important to making roads safer for drivers of all ages," Rader said. "In essence, this bill ensures that our teen drivers have the experience they need before we put them behind the wheel of a 4,000 pound automobile."

Commissioner of Vehicle Regulation Roy Mundy emphasized the essential nature of a Graduated Driver's License program. "Making Kentucky highways safer is a priority for the Transportation Cabinet," said Commissioner Mundy. "This legislation is long overdue and so important for highway safety. We all applaud the efforts of the House of Representatives to take this initiative one step closer to becoming law."

The amended bill was passed in the House with a vote of 89 to 3. The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration. Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia already have a full Graduated Driver's License Program.

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE APPROVES SPEED LIMIT INCREASE

A bill to increase the speed limit on Interstates and Parkways in Kentucky to 70 MPH was reported favorably out of the Senate Committee on Transportation.

Senator Brett Guthrie (R-Bowling Green) is the sponsor of the legislation. "I'm convinced that we can safely increase the speed limit to 70 MPH," said Sen. Guthrie, who chairs the Senate Transportation Committee. "If you drive I-65 from Gary, Indiana to Mobile, Alabama the only time you find a speed limit other than 70 is when you're passing through Kentucky."

Deputy Transportation Cabinet Secretary Jim Adams testi-



get an additional \$11.2 million in federal funds to use for safety improvements on state roads.

The bill now goes on to the full House of Representatives for a vote.

KENTUCKY HOUSE PASSES GRADUATED DRIVER'S LICENSE BILL

The Kentucky House of Representatives gave its approval to a bill which will expand the Commonwealth's Graduated Driver's License Program. House Bill 90 will create an intermediate

fied before the committee to the fact that the Interstates and Parkways were designed to accommodate speeds of up to 75 MPH. "We are confident that a speed limit increase to 70 MPH will not compromise safety on Kentucky's roads," Secretary Adams said. "We also believe this bill will facilitate mobility of people and products, which would be another plus for Kentucky's economy."

"We've studied this proposal carefully," added Sen. Guthrie. "There is no evidence in the data from other states that increasing the speed limit to 70 resulted in a corresponding increase in accidents on parkways and interstates."

So far, thirty-one states have increased their interstate speed limits to 70 MPH.

A vote on primary seat belt legislation is expected later in the session.

SENATE AND HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE DECIDES FAVORABLY ON "QUICK CLEARANCE" BILL

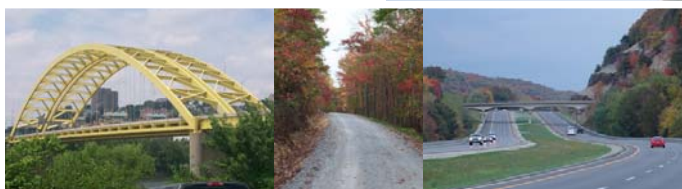
"Quick Clearance" legislation was reported favorably out of the House Judiciary Committee. House Bill 272 addresses the problems of motorist safety and clogged interstates following traffic accidents.

State Representative David Osborne (R-Prospect), a cosponsor of HB 272, the House version of SB 44, underlined the aspect of this legislation which is intended to prevent additional accidents.

"By making sure these accidents are quickly moved out of the way, we avoid additional accidents that may be the result of traffic congestion, secondary crashes and the risk to people standing outside of the vehicles at the accident site," Osborne said. "This bill is important when you consider that nationally an estimated 20 percent of all accidents are the result of secondary crashes."

The bill, which has already cleared the Senate, now moves to the full House for consideration.

TRANSPORTATION CABINET PRESENTS SIX-YEAR HIGHWAY PLAN TO SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE



The new recommended six-year highway plan for Kentucky was unveiled before the Senate Transportation Committee. The state's "road map for the future," for FY 2007-FY 2012, focuses on building, maintaining and improving Kentucky's highway network in a manner that paves the way for smoother, safer roads, leading to economic opportunities for all Kentuckians.

"The plan is based upon input from local communities and highway districts, and for the first time, from the Economic Development and Commerce Cabinets," said Secretary Bill Nighbert. "We recognize that the needs across the state outweigh our ability to fully fund them, but we have worked hard to set priorities that will respond to the objectives set forth by Governor Fletcher."

The Six Year Plan includes \$4.8 billion in federally funded highway programs and \$3 billion in state funded programs. The level of federally funded programs matches the revenues anticipated for Kentucky based upon the recently enacted SAFETEA-LU transportation legislation.

The plan continues a commitment by Governor Fletcher to better maintain the safety and reliability of Kentucky's existing 27,000 mile state highways. It includes over \$948 million in pavement repair and bridge replacement projects. Combined with the emphasis on maintaining our existing highway system, the plan also invests in a responsible level of highway system expansion to meet the most urgent mobility and economic development needs of motorists throughout the state.

"I'm pleased that this administration has presented a plan which emphasizes safety and economic development," said Transportation Committee Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-Bowling Green).



Photo courtesy of www.battalion22.com

Senate Minority Floor Leader, Ed Worley (D-Richmond), complimented the Transportation Cabinet's vision behind the development of the current Six Year Road Plan. "I think your concept of building roads for jobs is a very wise investment of state money," Sen. Worley said.

The level of state funded programs continues to exceed available revenues by more than \$1.3 billion dollars. The state funded portion of the Six-Year Plan has exceeded available revenue since the enactment of the 2000 Six-Year Highway Plan.

Contributing to the challenge of addressing Kentucky's highway needs are the rising costs to build and maintain new highways. A project that required \$1 million to complete in 1987, now requires over \$1.6 million. Today, reconstructing a basic two-lane highway in Eastern Kentucky can require upwards of \$15 million per mile.

"The needs for transportation improvements continue to far exceed the resources available to meet those needs," stated Marc Williams, Commissioner of Highways. "Our challenge is to continue to work as efficiently as possible to deliver as many projects from this plan as we possibly can. Our transportation system must measure up to the requirements of a vibrant and growing economy which this administration envisions for the Commonwealth."

As required by Kentucky Revised Statutes, Chapter 176, this plan serves as a supplement to the Executive Branch Biennial Budget. The plan is the vehicle through which major highway improvement projects scheduled for the upcoming biennium are submitted to the state General Assembly for approval. It outlines the intent of the KYTC to pursue a specific list of projects over the coming years, subject to available funding.